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Andrews

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(54) **DROP EMITTING APPARATUS**

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Related U.S. Application Data

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
B41J 2/015 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **347/20**; 347/62; 347/68; 347/94

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 347/20, 347/54, 56, 61–65, 67–71, 92–94, 55
See application file for complete search history.

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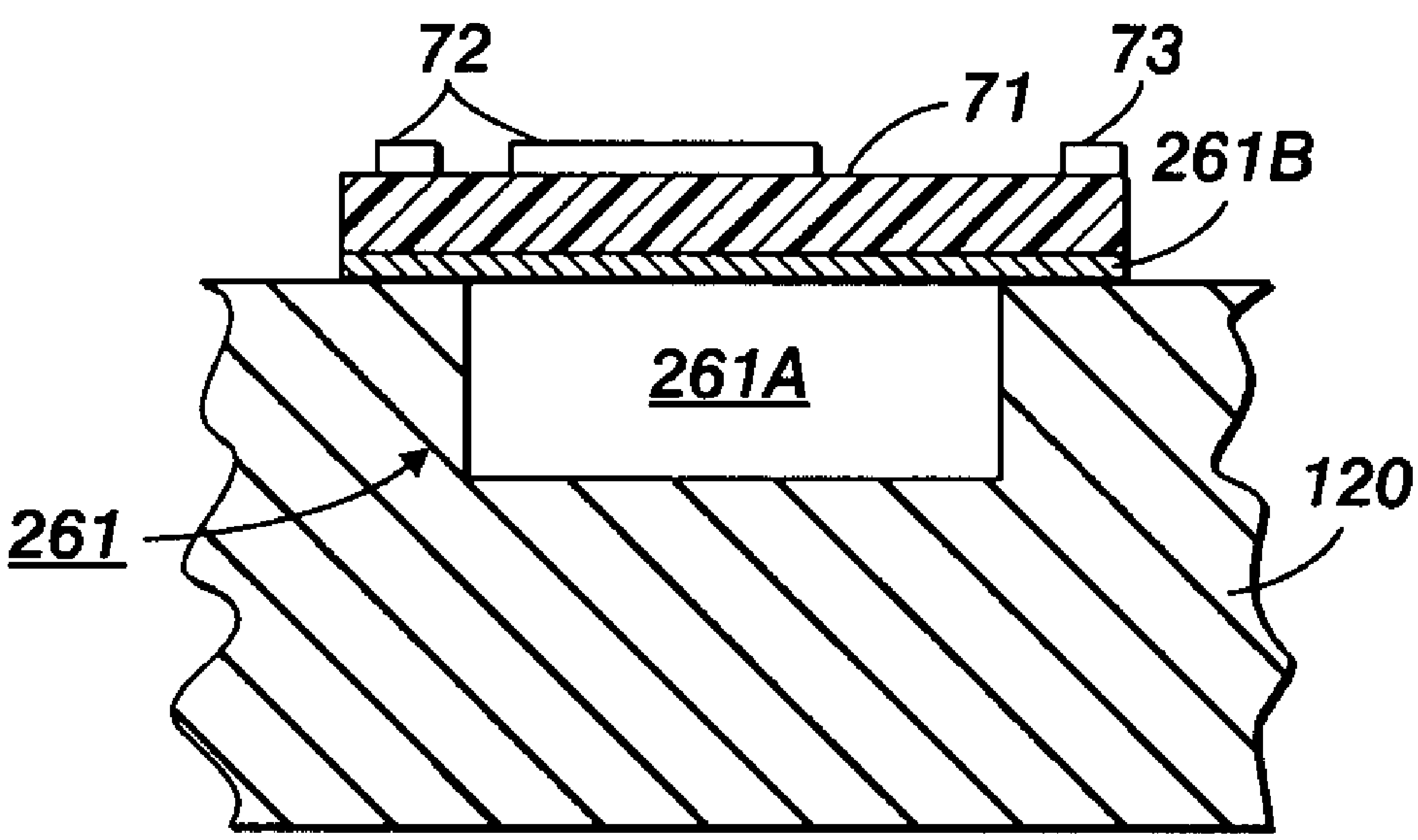
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A drop emitting apparatus including a manifold, a viscoelastic structure acoustically coupled to the manifold, and a plurality of drop generators fluidically coupled to the manifold.

16 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets



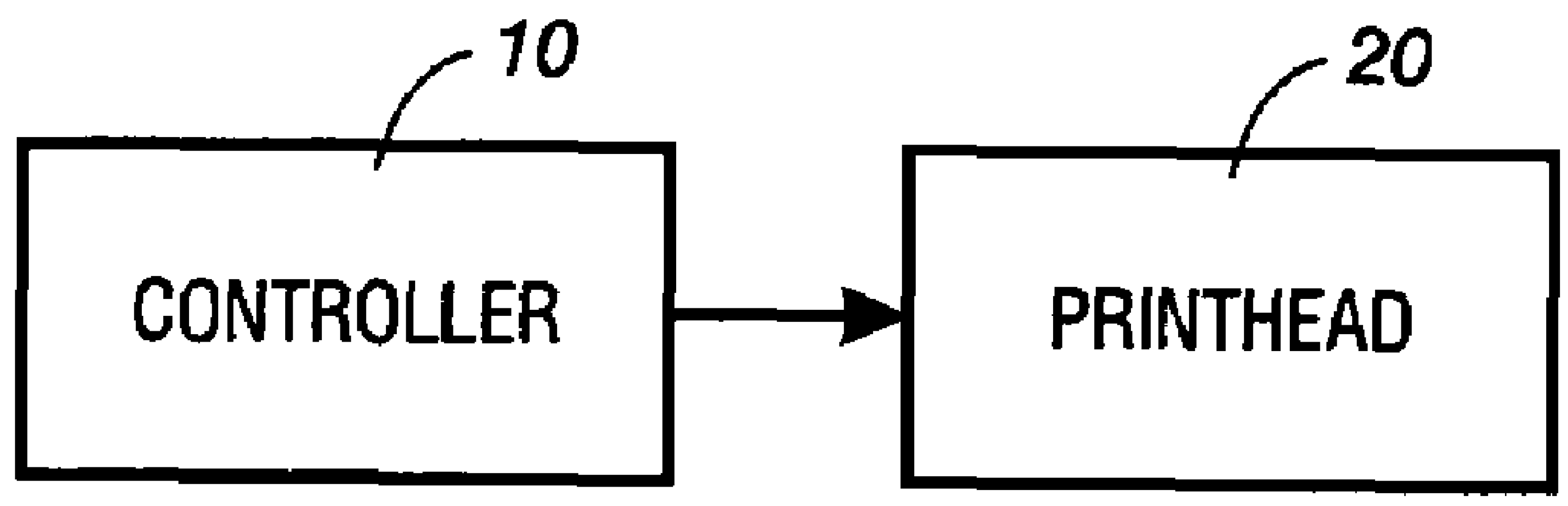


FIG. 1

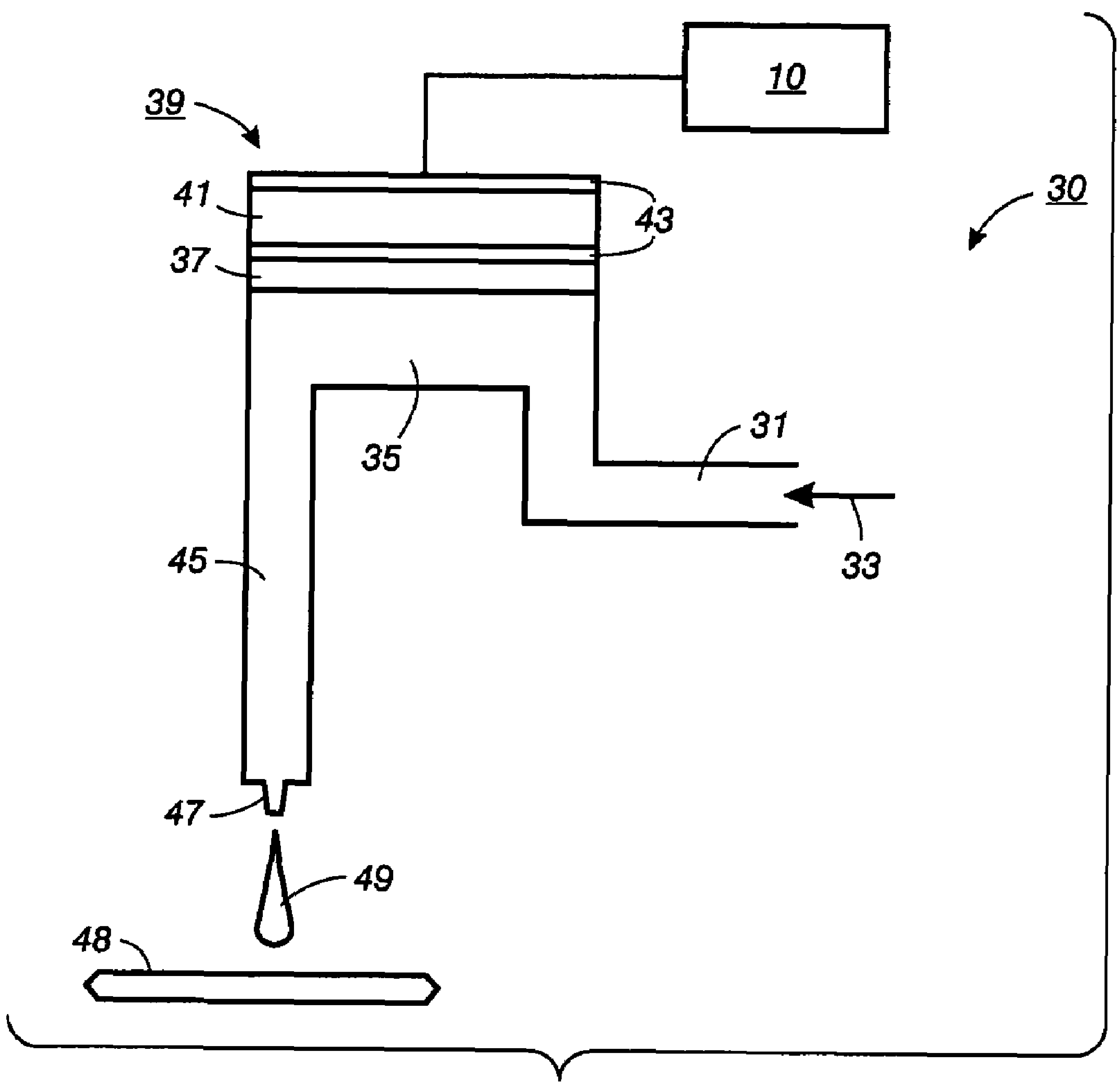


FIG. 2

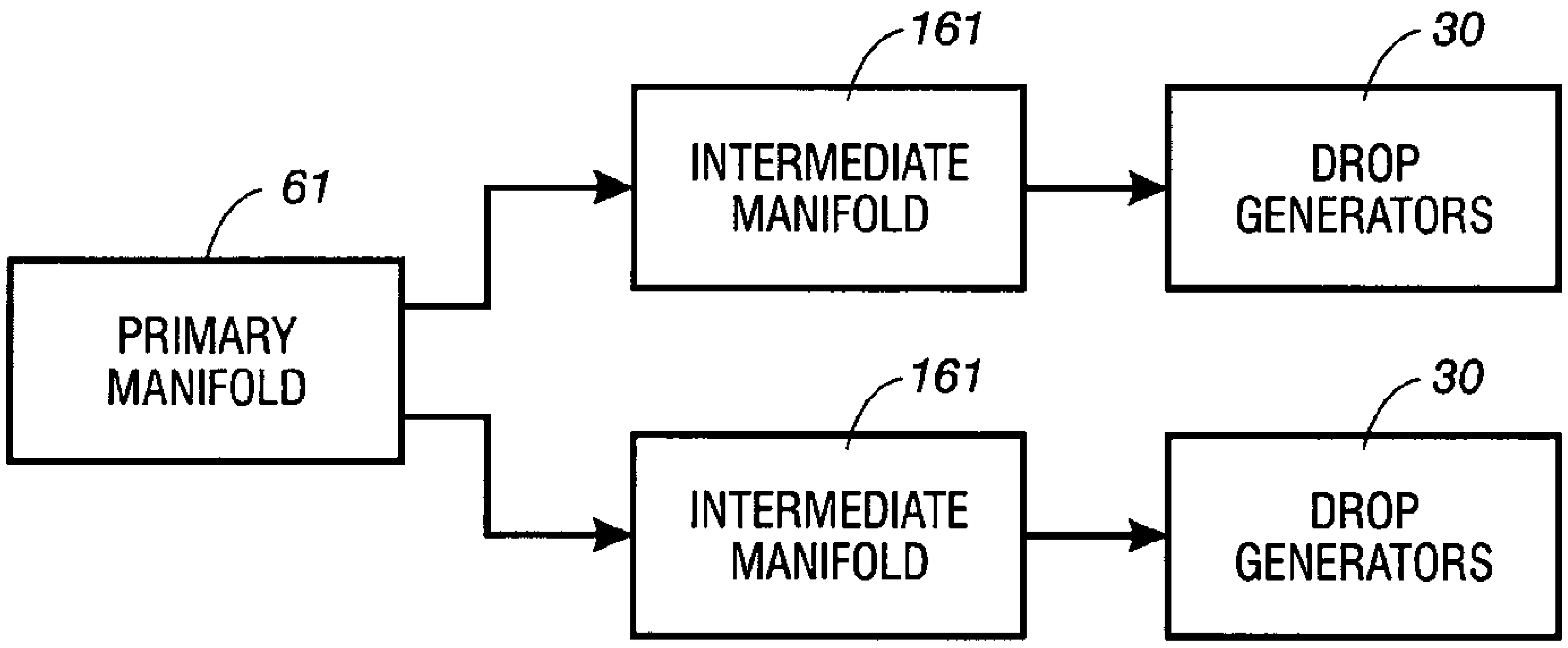


FIG. 3

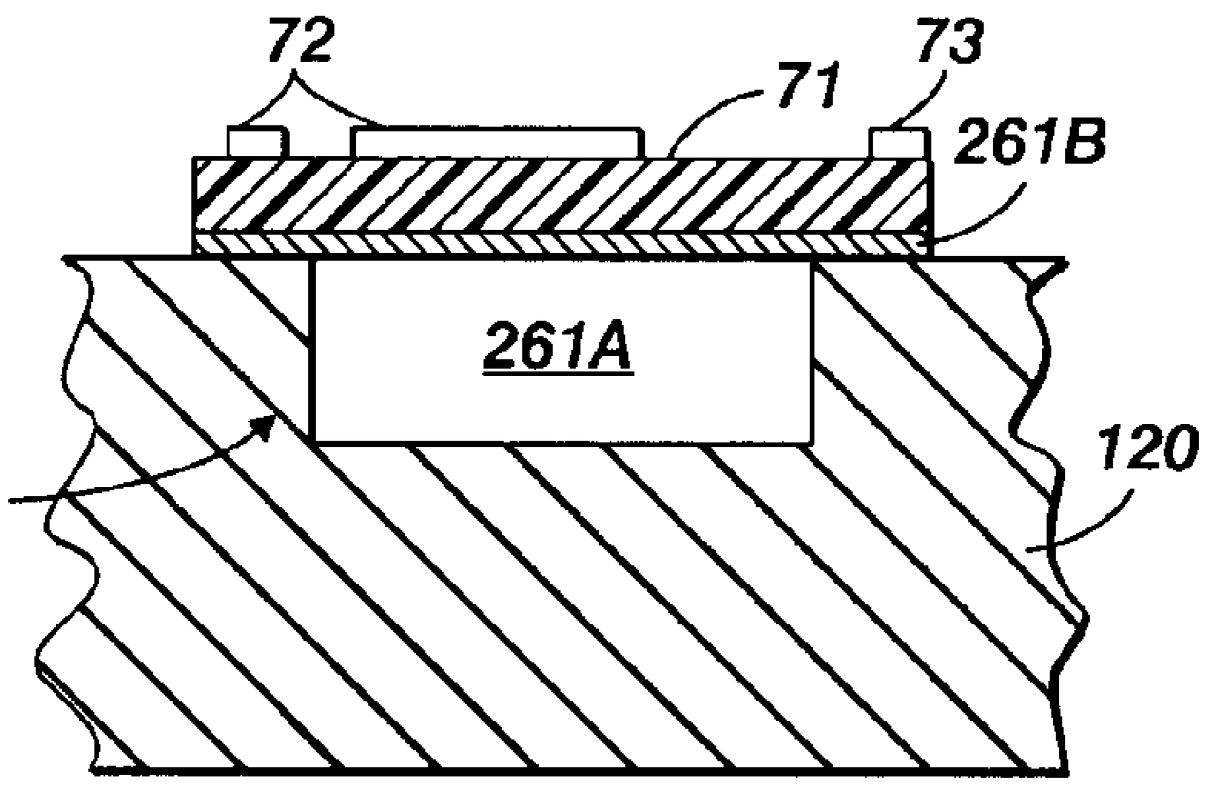


FIG. 4

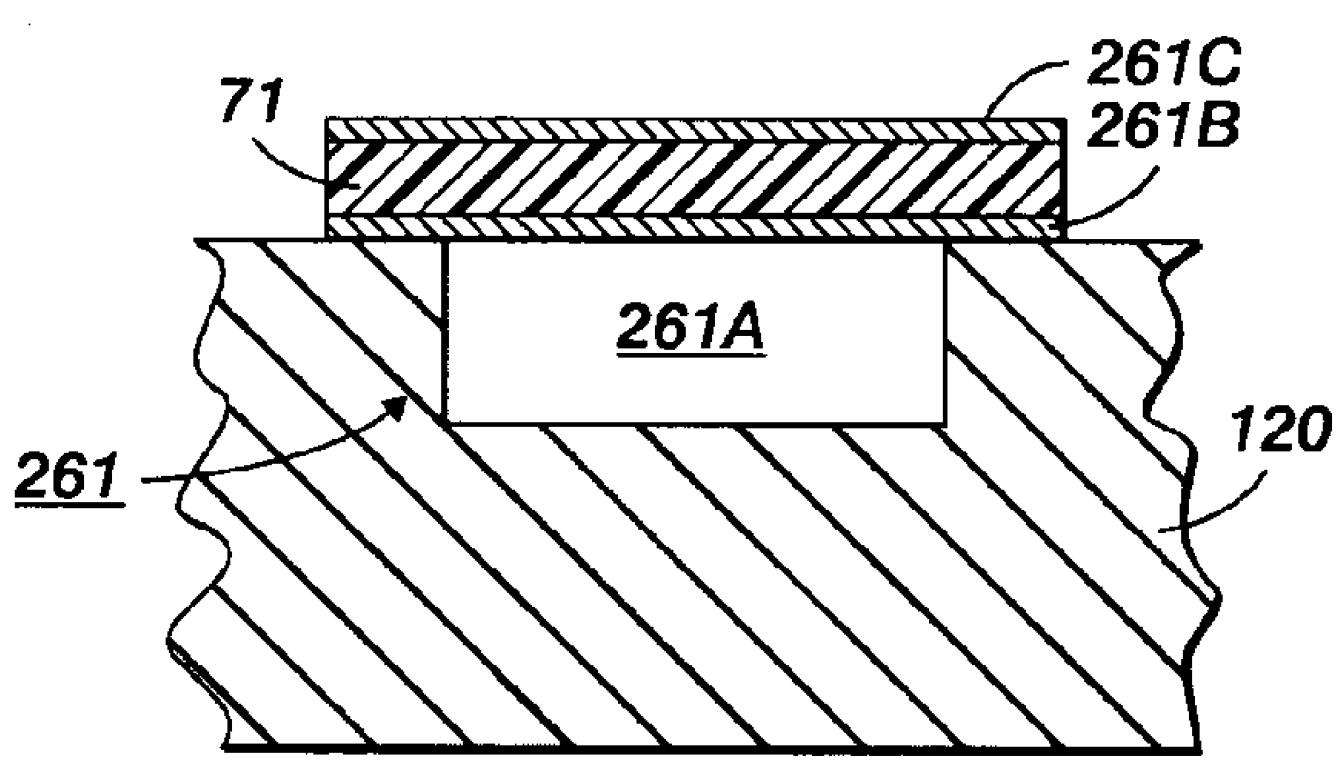


FIG. 5

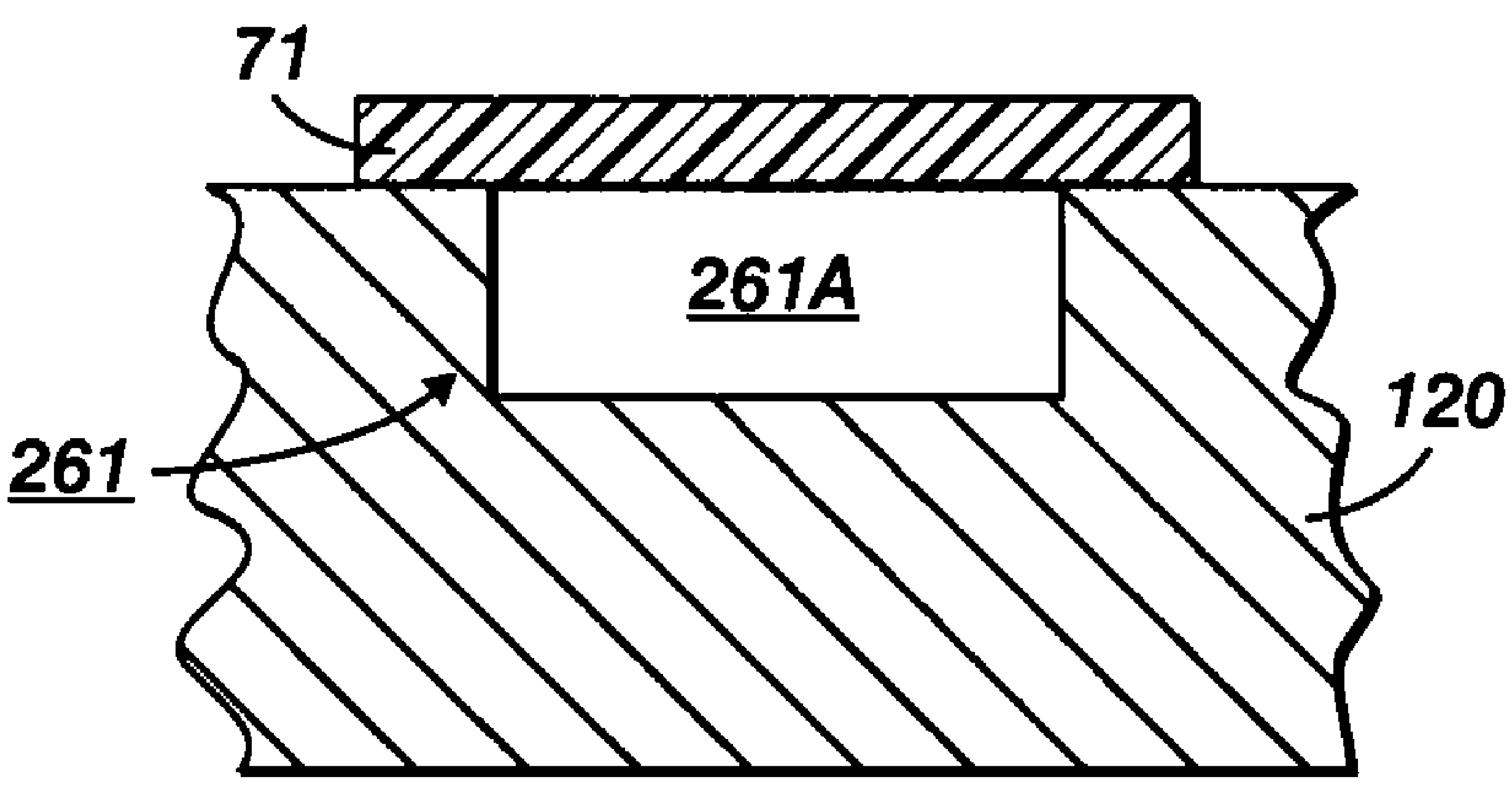


FIG. 6

DROP EMITTING APPARATUS

This application is a continuation of, and claims priority to, U.S. application Ser. No. 10/990,229 filed Nov. 15, 2004, now U.S. Pat. No. 7,399,050.

BACKGROUND

The disclosure relates generally to drop emitting apparatus including for example drop jetting devices.

Drop on demand ink jet technology for producing printed media has been employed in commercial products such as printers, plotters, and facsimile machines. Generally, an ink jet image is formed by selective placement on a receiver surface of ink drops emitted by a plurality of drop generators implemented in a printhead or a printhead assembly. For example, the printhead assembly and the receiver surface are caused to move relative to each other, and drop generators are controlled to emit drops at appropriate times, for example by an appropriate controller. The receiver surface can be a transfer surface or a print medium such as paper. In the case of a transfer surface, the image printed thereon is subsequently transferred to an output print medium such as paper.

It can be difficult to control drop mass/volume and/or drop velocity in drop emitting apparatus such as ink jet printers.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a schematic block diagram of an embodiment of a drop-on-demand drop emitting apparatus.

FIG. **2** is a schematic block diagram of an embodiment of a drop generator that can be employed in the drop emitting apparatus of FIG. **1**.

FIG. **3** is a schematic block diagram of an embodiment of fluidic architecture of a drop emitting apparatus.

FIG. **4** is a schematic depiction of an embodiment of a manifold structure that can be employed in a drop emitting apparatus.

FIG. **5** is a schematic depiction of an embodiment of another manifold structure that can be employed in a drop emitting apparatus.

FIG. **6** is a schematic depiction of an embodiment of a further manifold structure that can be employed in a drop emitting apparatus.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

FIG. **1** is schematic block diagram of an embodiment of a drop-on-demand printing apparatus that includes a controller **10** and a printhead assembly **20** that can include a plurality of drop emitting drop generators. The controller **10** selectively energizes the drop generators by providing a respective drive signal to each drop generator. Each of the drop generators can employ a piezoelectric transducer. As other examples, each of the drop generators can employ a shear-mode transducer, an annular constrictive transducer, an electrostrictive transducer, an electromagnetic transducer, or a magnetorestrictive transducer. The printhead assembly **20** can be formed of a stack of laminated sheets or plates, such as of stainless steel.

FIG. **2** is a schematic block diagram of an embodiment of a drop generator **30** that can be employed in the printhead assembly **20** of the printing apparatus shown in FIG. **1**. The drop generator **30** includes an inlet channel **31** that receives ink **33**, for example from an ink containing manifold. The ink **33** flows into an ink pressure or pump chamber **35** that is bounded on one side, for example, by a flexible diaphragm **37**. An electromechanical transducer **39** is attached to the flexible diaphragm **37** and can overlie the pressure chamber **35**, for example. The electromechanical transducer **39** can be a piezoelectric transducer that includes a piezo element **41** disposed for example between electrodes **43** that receive drop firing and non-firing signals from the controller **10**. Actuation of the electromechanical transducer **39** causes ink to flow from the pressure chamber **35** through an outlet channel **45** to a drop forming nozzle or orifice **47**, from which an ink drop **49** is emitted toward a receiver medium **48** that can be a transfer surface, for example.

The ink **33** can be melted or phase changed solid ink, and the electromechanical transducer **39** can be a piezoelectric transducer that is operated in a bending mode, for example.

FIG. **3** is a block diagram of an embodiment of a fluidic structure that can be employed in the printhead assembly **20** (FIG. **1**). The fluidic structure includes a primary manifold **61** that receives ink **33** from an ink supply such as an ink reservoir or tank. The primary manifold **61** is fluidically coupled to a plurality of intermediate manifolds **161**, each of which is fluidically coupled to a plurality of drop generators **30**. Alternatively, the intermediate manifolds **161** can be omitted such that the drop generators **30** can be more directly fluidically coupled to the primary manifold **61**.

FIG. **4** is a schematic block diagram of an embodiment of a manifold **261** that can be employed as any one of the manifolds of the manifold structure of FIG. **3**. The manifold **261** comprises a manifold cavity **261**A formed in a substrate **120**, a compliant wall **261**B forming a wall of the manifold, and a viscoelastic layer **71** attached to the compliant wall **261**B. The viscoelastic layer **71** can be on an outside surface of the compliant wall **261**B or on the inside surface of the compliant wall **261**B, depending upon the particular application. The viscoelastic layer **71** can comprise a viscoelastic solid or a viscoelastic foam. The viscoelastic foam can be injected, for example in an implementation wherein the compliant wall **261**B is internal to the substrate **120** in which the manifold **261** is formed, or wherein the compliant wall **261**B is otherwise enclosed. The viscoelastic layer **71** can also comprise a viscoelastic circuit board such as viscoelastic flexible circuit board, supporting circuit **72**. The viscoelastic layer **71** can further comprise a viscoelastic substrate, such as a viscoelastic flexible substrate, and a heater **73** supported by the viscoelastic substrate. Still further, the viscoelastic layer **71** can comprise a viscoelastic circuit board/heater structure. The compliant wall **261**B can be an elastic compliant wall, and can comprise for example stainless steel or a viscoelastic material.

FIG. **5** is a schematic block diagram of an embodiment of a further manifold **261** that can be employed as any one of the manifolds of the manifold structure of FIG. **3**. The manifold **261** comprises a manifold cavity **261**A formed in a substrate **120**, a compliant wall **261**B forming a wall of the manifold, a wall **261**C separated from the compliant wall **261**B, and a viscoelastic layer **71** laminarly disposed between the compliant wall **261**B and the wall **261**C which can comprise a compliant wall. The compliant wall **261**B can be an elastic compliant wall and can comprise stainless steel or a viscoelastic material. The wall **261**C can also comprise a stainless steel or a viscoelastic material, for example. The viscoelastic layer **71** can comprise a viscoelastic solid or a viscoelastic foam. The viscoelastic layer **71** can also comprise a viscoelastic circuit board such as a viscoelastic flexible circuit. The viscoelastic layer **71** can further comprise a viscoelastic substrate, such as a viscoelastic flexible substrate, and a heater supported by the viscoelastic substrate. Still further, the viscoelastic layer **71** can comprise a viscoelastic circuit board/heater structure.

FIG. **6** is a schematic block diagram of an embodiment of another manifold **261** that can be employed as any one of the manifolds of the manifold structure of FIG. **3**. The manifold **261** comprises a manifold cavity **261**A formed in a substrate **120** and a viscoelastic compliant wall **71** forming a compliant wall of the manifold. The viscoelastic wall **71** comprises a viscoelastic material, and can be implemented without a separate compliant wall attached thereto. By way of illustrative example, the viscoelastic wall **71** can comprise a viscoelastic circuit board such as viscoelastic flexible circuit board. The viscoelastic compliant wall **71** can further comprise a viscoelastic substrate, such as a viscoelastic flexible substrate, and a heater supported by the viscoelastic substrate. Still further, the viscoelastic compliant wall **71** can comprise a viscoelastic circuit board/heater structure.

The substrate **120** in which the manifold **261** is implemented can comprise for example a laminar stack of bonded metal plates such as stainless steel. As another example, the substrate **120** can comprise a viscoelastic material.

In general, the disclosed drop generator includes a viscoelastic structure that is acoustically coupled to a manifold and can comprise, for example, a wall of the manifold or a viscoelastic layer attached to a compliant wall that forms a wall, or a portion of a wall, of the manifold. The viscoelastic structure can provide acoustic damping or attenuation over one or more predetermined frequency ranges. The viscoelastic structure can provide acoustic attenuation over a frequency range that includes frequencies that could otherwise cause image banding, for example a frequency range of about 0.5 kHz to about 5 kHz. As another example, the viscoelastic structure can provide acoustic attenuation over a frequency range that includes frequencies that can cause density noise in the image, for example a frequency range of about 5 kHz to about 45 kHz. Also, the viscoelastic structure can provide acoustic attenuation over a frequency range that includes the drop firing frequency.

By way of illustrative example, the viscoelastic structure of the manifold **261** comprises an elastomer, adhesive, or plastic material that is directly in contact with the manifold, or an elastomer, adhesive or plastic material in contact with a compliant element that forms a wall, or portion of a wall of the manifold.

A wide range of materials, including polymers, having viscoelastic properties can be employed in the viscoelastic structures. Specific examples include acrylic rubber, butyl rubber, nitrile rubber, natural rubber, fluorosilicone rubber, fluorocarbon rubber, polyethylene, polymethyl methacralate silicone rubber, polyimide, polyether sulphone, polyetherimide, polytetrafluoroethylene, polyesters, polyethylene naphthalene, acrylic adhesives, silicone adhesives, epoxy adhesives, phenolic adhesives, acrylic-epoxy blends and phenolic adhesives blended with nitrile rubbers.

By way of further illustrative example, the viscoelastic structure comprises material having loss factor that is greater than about 0.01. As another example, the viscoelastic structure can have a loss factor that is greater than about 1.0 or 1.5. The viscoelastic structure can also have a loss factor that is greater than about 2.0.

The claims, as originally presented and as they may be amended, encompass variations, alternatives, modifications, improvements, equivalents, and substantial equivalents of the embodiments and teachings disclosed herein, including those that are presently unforeseen or unappreciated, and that, for example, may arise from applicants/patentees and others.

What is claimed is:

1. A drop emitting apparatus comprising:

a fluid manifold having at least one wall made of a viscoelastic material, the wall being in contact with fluid on the manifold side and at least in part in contact with air on the side opposite the fluid to allow the wall to attenuate acoustic energy, wherein the viscoelastic wall further comprises a heater; and

a plurality of drop generators fluidically coupled to the manifold.

2. The drop emitting apparatus of claim **1** wherein the viscoelastic material comprises an elastomer, adhesive or plastic material.

3. The drop emitting apparatus of claim **1** wherein the viscoelastic material is selected from the group consisting of acrylic rubber, butyl rubber, nitrile rubber, natural rubber, fluorosilicone rubber, fluorocarbon rubber, polyethylene, polymethyl methacralate silicone rubber, polyimide, polyether sulphone, polyetherimide, polytetrafluoroethylene, polyesters, polyethylene naphthalene.

4. The drop emitting apparatus of claim **3** in which the wall is comprised of a multilayer material having one layer being of the viscoelastic material, and the other layer being an adhesive layer consisting at least one of the adhesives: acrylic adhesives, silicone adhesives, epoxy adhesives, phenolic adhesives, acrylic-epoxy blends, thermoplastic polyimide adhesive, and phenolic adhesives blended with nitrile rubbers.

5. The drop emitting apparatus of claim **3** in which the wall is comprised of a multilayer material having one layer being of the viscoelastic material, and the other layer being an adhesive layer consisting at least one of the adhesives: acrylic adhesives, silicone adhesives, epoxy adhesives, phenolic adhesives, acrylic-epoxy blends, thermoplastic polyimide adhesive, and phenolic adhesives blended with nitrile rubbers.

6. The drop emitting apparatus of claim **1** in which the wall comprises a structure having a first surface layer consisting of a first adhesive, a second surface layer consisting of a second adhesive, and a core layer which selected from the group consisting of acrylic rubber, butyl rubber, nitrile rubber, natural rubber, fluorosilicone rubber, fluorocarbon rubber, polyethylene, polymethyl methacralate silicone rubber, polyimide, polyether sulphone, polyetherimide, polytetrafluoroethylene, polyesters, polyethylene naphthalene and the first and second adhesives are selected from the group consisting of acrylic adhesives, silicone adhesives, epoxy adhesives, phenolic adhesives, acrylic-epoxy blends, thermoplastic polyimide adhesive, and phenolic adhesives blended with nitrile rubbers.

7. The drop emitting apparatus of claim **6** in which the viscoelastic wall is bonded to form a manifold wall on one side and bonded to a second layer on the opposite side in which the second layer does not constrain the viscoelastic layer over at least part of the manifold.

8. The drop emitting apparatus of claim **7** in which the multilayer viscoelastic layer is bonded to form a manifold wall on one side and bonded to a second layer on the opposite side in which the second layer is unconstrained.

9. The drop emitting apparatus of claim **7** in which the multilayer viscoelastic layer is bonded to form a manifold wall on one side and bonded to a second layer on the opposite side in which the second layer is unconstrained.

10. The drop emitting apparatus of claim **6** in which the viscoelastic wall is bonded to form a manifold wall on one side and bonded to a second layer on the opposite side in which the second layer does not constrain the viscoelastic layer over at least part of the manifold.

11. The drop emitting apparatus of claim **1**, wherein the viscoelastic wall further includes a circuit on the wall.

12. The drop emitting apparatus of claim **1** wherein the viscoelastic material comprises an elastomer, adhesive or plastic material.

13. The drop emitting apparatus of claim **1** wherein the viscoelastic material is selected from the group consisting of acrylic rubber, butyl rubber, nitrile rubber, natural rubber, fluorosilicone rubber, fluorocarbon rubber, polyethylene, polymethyl methacralate silicone rubber, polyimide, polyether sulphone, polyetherimide, polytetrafluoroethylene, polyesters, polyethylene naphthalene.

14. The drop emitting apparatus of claim **1** in which the wall comprises a structure having a first surface layer consisting of a first adhesive, a second surface layer consisting of a second adhesive, and a core layer which selected from the group consisting of acrylic rubber, butyl rubber, nitrile rubber, natural rubber, fluorosilicone rubber, fluorocarbon rubber, polyethylene, polymethyl methacralate silicone rubber, polyimide, polyether sulphone, polyetherimide, polytetrafluoroethylene, polyesters, polyethylene naphthalene and the first and second adhesives are selected from the group consisting of acrylic adhesives, silicone adhesives, epoxy adhesives, phenolic adhesives, acrylic-epoxy blends, thermoplastic polyimide adhesive, and phenolic adhesives blended with nitrile rubbers.

15. A drop emitting apparatus comprising:

a fluid manifold having at least one wall made of a viscoelastic material, the wall being in contact with fluid on the manifold side and at least in part in contact with air on the side opposite the fluid to allow the wall to attenuate acoustic energy, wherein the viscoelastic wall further includes a circuit on the wall; and

a plurality of drop generators fluidically coupled to the manifold.

16. The drop emitting apparatus of claim **15**, wherein the viscoelastic wall further comprises a heater.

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